

JANUARY 26, 1978

Farmers have been plenty smart burning off their displeasure taking tractor rides to and from the statehouses and jamming up the interstates. Waving signs and shouting over microphones is a good way to relieve frustrations. By spring the farmers are going back to work. They are going to be sick of asphalt and diesel fumes that the plowed earth is going to smell good regardless of the price of wheat.

I wish our camp would do something dramatic like walk off the job down to the Bahamas Islands for the winter or threaten to take a long trip to Hawaii unless our business improves. Cow people have been in desperate straits since 1973. In those four years we could have stormed Washington and had enough time left over to throw rotten tomatoes at the capitol buildings of all 50 states.

We need to bring attention to our troubles. Do things like burning down vegetable stands or writing slogans on the windows of supermarkets in cow's blood. Give them notice that all the consumer is going to need a toothpick for is to spear olives from martini glasses, and the next chance he's going to have to taste roast beef is in case he wins a Reader's Digest trip to merry old England.

Mertzon alone has scores of firebrands, high tempered men who'll kill a double six in a hot domino game without ever thinking of their opponent. Men of action. Ice shovelers and cottonseed cake feeders. Old boys that have been eye level deep in debt and never lost a night's sleep.

I'll tell you or anyone else that the new West is made up of some mighty tough hombres, hard customers that can stand a lot of physical and mental punishment. Once, for example, I overheard a beauty operator commenting on what a challenge it was to work in the Shortgrass Country. She wasn't referring to the dust storms or the cold weather. You know what she meant. I've known guys who could eat their instant oatmeal while sitting across the breakfast table from sights of balled-up terrycloth that'd make an Eastern dude flee for the eye bank.

Beauty operators only see their customers maybe once a week. This was every morning in the rough, without paint, just like they were born except not quite so red and maybe a little bit more wrinkled.

Governors and other politicians had better be thankful we didn't decide to wreck D.C. or block the traffic at Austin. Once we got started we'd be a terror shaking our fists in front of national shrines. I guess we just love the country too much to show how mean we are.

Farmers don't have to do anything else to prove their case. Anyone who is in bad enough shape to think the government can help is in deep trouble. I often wonder whether that beauty operator quit or changed locations. She wasn't much for looks herself. I'll bet that's why she was such a smartmouth.